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**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS ADVOCATES TO EDUCATE AND WARN IMMIGRANTS ABOUT RECENT CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION LAW**

**NEW LAW PROVIDES RELIEF TO LIMITED NUMBER OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

**CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), the Polish American Association, and others to educate and warn immigrants about recent changes in immigration law. At a news conference, they addressed the Legal Immigration and Family Equity Act (LIFE), a bill signed into law on December 21, 2000.**

**Under LIFE, section 245(i) is temporarily restored, allowing a limited number of undocumented immigrants to apply for legal status while remaining in the United States. To qualify, an undocumented immigrants must meet a number of conditions. These conditions state that undocumented immigrants can gain legal status only if they already qualify to become Legal Permanent Residents; the INS must receive the petition and \$1000 fine by April 30, 2001; and undocumented immigrants who filed for 245(i) relief after January 14, 1998 must prove that they were present in the country on December 21, 2000.**

**"We're here today for two purposes: to educate and to warn. First, we must make it our mission to reach every individual who may be eligible under this new law and help him or her gain legal status. Second, before it's too late, we must warn others who don't qualify under this law that this is not a new amnesty," Schakowsky said.**

**"The benefits for those who qualify under LIFE is that they can stay in the United States, with their families, while they obtain legal status. Time is running out and they only have three and a half months to respond. But there are harsh consequences for those who don't qualify and petition incorrectly. They will be deported and barred from returning to the United States for ten years. It is critical to know whether or not you qualify," Schakowsky said.**

**She added, "This change in law clearly does not go far enough in restoring fairness to our immigration laws and ending the harsh provisions of the 1996 immigration law. I fear it may cause additional confusion. Immigrants who have been here for years and are willing to go through the process to become legal residents should not have to be separated from their spouses and children."**

**Schakowsky also warned that having John Ashcroft as Attorney General, with major influence over immigration laws and the interpretation and implementation of regulations, immigration policies could become worse.**

**"John Ashcroft's record on immigrants during his tenure in the U.S. Senate is poor. How can he explain his opposition to giving new citizens access to benefits, immigrants access to Food Stamps, and battered immigrant women a greater chance to flee their abusers? I am concerned that as Attorney General he could use his office to further restrict benefits to our nation's immigrants" Schakowsky said.**